English 4351.001: 20th-Century Literature and Writing: The Literature of Passing

Class Meeting Time: TR: 5:30-6:45
Classroom: BH 234
Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: FC 262
Office Hours: TR: 2:00-4:00; W 10:00-11:00 and by appointment
Office Phone: 825-3874
Email: kevin.concannon@tamucc.edu
Semester: Fall 2012

Course Description: This course is designed to review and draw upon your previous experiences in the English program. Part of this review will result in the assembling of a portfolio of your work that will be due at the end of the semester. There will also be the opportunity for you to develop an independent project that will explore an issue related to the class topic.

The focus of this course will be on the literature of passing. The term is often used to refer to works that explore the issue of racial passing, most commonly the experiences of those who are “legally” defined as African American passing for those defined as Caucasian. These texts challenge our perspectives and by doing so challenge how we see and understand the world. We will use this questioning perspective to explore larger questions concerning language, identity, citizenship rights, and national identity.

Required Texts:

Chesnutt, Charles. House Behind the Cedars
Griffin, John Howard. Black Like Me
Johnson, James Weldon. The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man
Larsen, Nella. Passing
Schuyler, George. Black No More
Williams, Gregory Howard. Life on the Color Line

Course Requirements:

Research Review: 10 points
Research Presentation: 10 points
5 Short Analytical Essays: 5 points each (25 points total)
Creative Essay: 10 points
Research Essay: 25 points
Capstone Portfolio: 10 points
Class Work: 10 points

1. Research Review: In this assignment you will provide a list of 10-15 sources that you are considering for your essay. You must provide annotations for five of these sources.

2. Research Presentation: Within a larger group, you will present your research to the class at the end of the semester. When presenting your material, you want to keep in mind ways to keep the audience engaged, whether through handouts or the asking of questions.
3. Short Analytical Essays: The essays should be 2 pages in length and should use the MLA format. You should keep your use of secondary sources to a minimum (or not at all). No late papers will be accepted for any written assignment.

4. Creative Essay: In this assignment, you want to write a short story or cycle of poems that draw upon one or more of the ideas discussed in class. You will also include with this writing a reflection letter that will explain the rhetorical choices and the thematic connections you have made.

4. Research Essay: This project is meant to represent the culmination of skills you have learned during your years as an English major. You will want to research a topic related to the issues of racial passing and to prepare a formal essay that integrates social, historical, and political readings with cultural and literary analysis. Papers must contain a minimum of 12-15 outside sources. Sources must include scholarly journal articles or books and may include carefully selected web sites. Papers should be approximately 12-15 pages in length.

5. Capstone Portfolio: This assignment will be graded on completeness, and the quality and pertinence of the reflective letter/essay. Please use the final page of this syllabus as your cover sheet.

Course Evaluation:

90-100: A  
80-89: B  
70-79: C  
60-69: D  
59 or below: F

Student Learning Outcomes:  
By the end of the semester, you will be able to:
1) apply professional standards in argumentation, research, and documentation;  
2) evaluate various uses of genre and textuality;  
3) create an independent research project by applying the skills of literary and cultural analysis.

Course Objectives:  
Over the course of the semester you will  
1) Explore course readings and issues with your peers in open and engaged discussions;  
2) Expand and share your knowledge of literature, contexts, and genres in relation to our thematic focus.  
3) Organize and reflect upon a portfolio of your college writings in four different discourse genres.  
4) Engage in sustained research that you will share with your classmates and use to develop your own individual project.

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process. As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of
days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamu.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

### Course Schedule

#### Passing to the Harlem Renaissance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Assignment Due</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>TH 8-23</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
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<td>T 8-28</td>
<td>Begin reading Chesnutt, <em>House Behind the Cedars</em> (I-VII)</td>
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<td>TH 8-30</td>
<td>Chesnutt, VIII-XIV</td>
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<td>T 9-4</td>
<td>Chesnutt, XV-XXII</td>
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<td>TH 9-6</td>
<td>Finish reading Chesnutt</td>
<td>Short Essay #1 due</td>
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<td>TH 9-13</td>
<td>Johnson (IV-VI)</td>
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<td>T 9-18</td>
<td>Johnson (VII-IX)</td>
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<td>TH 9-20</td>
<td>Johnson (X)</td>
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<td>T 9-25</td>
<td>Finish reading Johnson</td>
<td>Short Essay #2 due</td>
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<tr>
<td>TH 9-27</td>
<td>Begin reading Larsen (Part I)</td>
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<td>T 10-2</td>
<td>Continue reading Larsen (Part II)</td>
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<td>TH 10-4</td>
<td>Continue reading Larsen (Part III)</td>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
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<td>T 10-9</td>
<td>Finish Larsen and begin Griffin</td>
<td>Short Essay #3 due</td>
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#### Alternative Passing

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<th>Writing Assignment Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>TH 10-11</td>
<td>Continue Griffin, <em>Black Like Me</em> (Preface to page 38)</td>
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<td>T 10-16</td>
<td>Continue reading Griffin (39-99)</td>
<td>Creative Essay due</td>
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<td>TH 10-18</td>
<td>Continue Griffin (99-133)</td>
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<td>T 10-23</td>
<td>Finish Griffin</td>
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#### Contemporary Passing

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<td>TH 10-25</td>
<td>Begin reading Williams, <em>Life on the Color Line</em> (Chapter 1-3)</td>
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<td>T 10-30</td>
<td>Continue reading Williams (4-9)</td>
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### References:


Howells, William Dean. *An Imperative Duty*


Throughout the semester we have discussed fiction and non-fiction genres (novels, memoirs, autobiographies, short stories, oral histories, and diaries). In addition, you have worked in different genres (literary analysis, descriptive narrative, and research project). Your task for this assignment is to choose four pieces you have created over the course of your career as an English major and write a critical reflection of them. Your portfolio is due on Monday, November 15.

Whatever portfolio binding you use, make it simple and flat (so when stacked the portfolios won’t topple over).

Your portfolio must contain:

1) Four writings that you have done for classes in college. Clean copies (without teacher commentary/grade) are preferred. The pieces should display or exemplify a different discourse genre (drama, poetry, prose fiction, non-fiction etc.). One of the four pieces must be a literary analysis. Each submission should come from a different course.

2) Introductory essay or letter, approximately three pages long, in which you discuss and analyze your use and understanding of genre as illustrated by the pieces in your portfolio. Your discussion might include characteristics and purposes of each genre, and how choice of genres depends upon context, purpose, and audience. Note: the bulk of your portfolio grade in this class will be based on this essay.

3) Data sheet—please submit this page with the information below filled out.

Academic genres may include, but are not restricted to

**Fiction:** short story, poem, novel chapter, scene from a script

**Nonfiction:** biography, autobiography, argument, research paper, analysis, report, proposal, letter memorandum, editorial, printout from a PowerPoint created for an oral presentation.

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